

TRUTH B-P CHURCH
Adults Sunday School

PSALM 22 – THE SUFFERING CHRIST (PART 1)

I. INTRODUCTION

“To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, A Psalm of David.” This psalm is well known as the psalm of the cross. It is a messianic psalm written by David that depicts the coming Messiah. “Aijelath” means female deer. “Shahar” means early or morning. These words put together become a musical instrument used by the women in mourning. This is a psalm of mourning over how the psalmist was going through much suffering which also depicts the suffering Christ. And it is based upon the psalmist's experiences in his suffering.

Did the psalmist knew that his own suffering also reflect the suffering Christ? It is unlikely because not every human writer understand or grasp in full when they wrote God's Word by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They were writing based upon their own experiences as they go through them one by one. It was the Holy Spirit that filled them and use their experiences to depict the life and ministry of the Messiah. This is what happened to this psalm, which is why it is a called a messianic psalm.

II. THE CRY DUE TO SUFFERING

Verse 1, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?”

The suffering which the psalmist was going through is real. In the midst of suffering, he cried out to God. The prolonged suffering might have led him to think that God has abandoned him and left him alone to suffer by himself. There were at least two occasions in David's life in which he suffered. First was when he was pursued by king Saul. Second was when his own son Absalom tried to usurp his throne. His life was at stake. Therefore he had to flee for his life and became as a fugitive in order to save his own life.

The Lord Jesus Christ cried the same words as the first sentence in this verse (see Matthew 27:46). God will never forsake His own. Christ knew this very well. Why then did He uttered these words? God has all the power to deliver His only begotten Son from the cross and from all His enemies. But Christ has to die on the cross for the redemption of men. It was not a matter of the failure on God's part to help and provide deliverance. It was to fulfill God's higher purpose that His name might be highly exalted and magnified. How about David? Did he know that God will never forsake him? We shall know the answer in the following verses.

Verse 2, “O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.”

David's cry was not superficial. It was a genuine cry due to real suffering. No one likes to suffer, if given a choice. It is normal and natural to cry out in the midst of suffering. And the psalmist did the right thing by crying out to the Lord.

But he also cried that God did not hear him. Is that true? Let us understand that it was not because God did not hear his cry. God is certainly not deaf. Neither is he too far away from him that he could not hear him at all. No! The psalmist said this because there was no relief from his intense suffering. He knew God has heard him but there is still no help.

III. THE TRUST DUE TO FAITH

Verse 3, “But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.”

It is from these verses that we know the psalmist knew that God has not forsaken him. The prolonged suffering that he was going through was God's higher purpose and will for him. The word “but” proves this important point on the part of the psalmist. His faith was strengthened because of the trust that he had in God. His trust was also verbalized by his own confession of who God is to him.

God is holy. The holiness of God is that which reveals His anger against sin and His love towards righteousness. Sin has no part in Him and His kingdom. And therefore the psalmist knew that God has done nothing wrong in his prolonged suffering. By faith he knew God has not forsaken him. He just need to trust more in Him. This trust was strengthened because of the testimonies of those who had experienced it before. Verses 4 and 5 show this.

Verse 4, “Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.”

Verse 5, “They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.”

God is faithful. He has always been faithful. It is always sinful man who has been unfaithful to Him. To those who trust in Him, God will not fail to save them. The psalmist referred fathers to the patriarchs who had lived before him. Such knowledge of them was obtained through the learning of Scriptures by the prophets as well as by the parental teachings of the Scriptures that have been passed down from generation to generation. The psalmist was following the footsteps of his fathers by learning to trust in the same God who is faithful and whose hand was never too short to save.

IV. THE HUMILITY DUE TO FELLOWSHIP

Verse 6, “But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.”

Past victories and successes must not be taken for granted. If pride filled the heart, God will not hear us at all. The psalmist did not let the past deliverances which his fathers had experienced puffed up in his head. Instead he looked upon himself as a worm, not even a man. That's humility!

While he was being pursued by king Saul, David could have been proud of his achievement how he was better than king Saul by defeating the Philistine champion Goliath. While he was being pursued by his own son Absalom, David could have been proud of his achievement for the many warfares he won as the king of Israel. But he didn't. He humbled himself before God and that he is nothing but a worm.

The psalmist had shown clearly what a man after God's own heart is like. One who is humble and not proud at all. One who regards himself as nothing before God who makes him everything. The psalmist even saw himself as a reproach of men and despised by the people around. That's a worm! How low can a man go? Being trampled by men and looked down by them with no dignity and honour. That's how low the psalmist saw in himself before God.

Verse 7, “All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,”

Verse 8, “He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.”

Was the psalmist exaggerating? No, it was a real experience that he had gone through both before and after he became the king of Israel. It was truly humbling to go through such experiences. It was a vivid description how the psalmist was treated badly as if he was a worm. Being laugh to scorn would mean mocking, humiliating him, hurled all kinds of false accusations against him. Shaking their head of disapproval and despising him to the lowest degree. The attack goes beyond his person but his faith as well. They undermine his trust in God to deliver him. By attacking the psalmist, they had also attacked God.

It is noteworthy to note the testimony of the psalmist that he was bearing for the Lord. And this testimony was declared by his enemies who mocked at him to the highest degree. They confirmed that the psalmist had both trusted in God and delighted in Him. How did they know? It must be so evidenced in the life of the psalmist that there is no way that his testimony could be hidden when he is walking close with God and enjoying an intimate fellowship with Him. It could be his language. He refused to respond with bad words of vulgarity and any falsehood in order to win his case. Or it could be his prayer life that reveals his communion with God uninterrupted no matter what happened. What a testimony of faith and trust that we can learn from the psalmist.

Did not the Lord Jesus Christ remain faithful on the cross of Calvary? He suffered greatly from all the mocking, flogging on his backs, piercing of the nails into his hands and legs, and crucified high up on the cross for all to see. Yet He trusted God the Father for the mission He gave Him. That mission is to save us from our sins. What a sacrifice He made! That's how we are saved! Let us be thankful and reciprocate by loving and serving Him. May God help us. Amen.

(To be continued)